

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A system supporting access, monitoring, and control of appliances, the system comprising:

a set top box at a first location;

at least one home appliance at the first location; and

a local area network operationally coupling the set top box to the at least one home appliance, via a wired or wireless connection, to allow access, monitoring, and control of the at least one home appliance.

2. The system of claim 1 further comprising:

a personal computer at a remote second location;

a server at a remote third location; and

a wide area network operationally coupling the set top box, the personal computer, and the server via wired and/or wireless connections.

3. The system of claim 2 wherein the wide area network comprises:

at least one broadband access headend; and

an Internet infrastructure operationally coupling to the at least one broadband access headend.

4. The system of claim 3 wherein the at least one broadband access headend comprises a cable headend.

5. The system of claim 3 wherein the at least one broadband access headend comprises a satellite headend.
6. The system of claim 1 wherein the server is operated by a third party service provider.
7. The system of claim 1 wherein the set top box comprises:
 - a broadband communication interface;
 - software supporting communication between at least one media peripheral and the broadband communication interface.
8. The system of claim 7 wherein the at least one media peripheral comprises at least one of a television, a personal computer, and a media player.
9. The system of claim 7 wherein the at least one media peripheral comprises at least one display device.
10. The system of claim 1 wherein the at least one home appliance comprises at least one of a dish washer, a refrigerator, a microwave oven, a clothes washer, and a clothes dryer.
11. The system of claim 1 wherein the at least one home appliance comprises a heating system, an air conditioning system, and a hot water heater.

12. The system of claim 1 wherein the at least one home appliance comprises any device that is capable of being networked to the local area network.

13. The system of claim 1 further comprising a remote control at the first location communicatively coupled to control the set top box.

14. The system of claim 1 wherein the local area network comprises at least one of a home cable infrastructure, an Ethernet infrastructure, an 802.11b wireless infrastructure, or a home PNA (phoneline networking alliance) infrastructure.

15. A method of providing access, monitoring, and control of appliances via a communication network, the method comprising:

identifying by a first system, at a first location, at least one home appliance communicatively coupled to at least one of the first system and a second system, the second system at a second location;

establishing a communication link between the first system and the at least one home appliance via the communication network;

verifying authorization for control of the at least one home appliance by the first system;

communicating, from the first system, at least one command to the at least one home appliance via the communication network, if the verifying is successful;

refraining from communicating at least one command to the at least one home appliance via the communication network, if the verifying is not successful; and

receiving, at the first system, at least one response from the at least one home appliance, if a command was communicated.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein at least one of the first system and the second system comprises a set top box.

17. The method of claim 15 wherein at least one of the first system and the second system comprises a personal computer.

18. The method of claim 15 wherein at least one of the first system and the second system comprises a server.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein the server is operated by a third party service provider.

20. The method of claim 15 wherein the at least one home appliance comprises at least one of a dish washer, a refrigerator, a microwave oven, a clothes washer, and a clothes dryer.

21. The method of claim 15 wherein the at least one home appliance comprises at least one of a heating system, an air conditioning system, and a hot water heater.

22. The method of claim 15 wherein the at least one home appliance comprises any device that is capable of being networked to at least one of the first system and the second system.

23. The method of claim 15 wherein the communication link is via at least one wired connection.

24. The method of claim 15 wherein the communication link is via at least one wireless connection.

25. The method of claim 15 wherein at least one portion of the communication link is via a cable infrastructure.

26. The method of claim 15 wherein the communication link is via a plurality of wired and/or wireless connections.

27. The method of claim 15 wherein the at least one command comprises at least one of an access command, a power on command, a power off command, a parameter adjustment command, a mode change command, a parameter monitor command, and a programming command.

28. The method of claim 15 wherein the at least one response comprises at least one of:

the at least one appliance powering on;

the at least one appliance powering off;

the at least one appliance changing a mode of operation;

the at least one appliance sending a status to the first system;

the at least one appliance adjusting an operational parameter; and

the at least one appliance changing at least one programmed operational step.